

29 JUN 1998

Airport

NATION BIDS FAREWELL TO SUBANG, KLIA ALL SET FOR TAKE-OFF

KUALA LUMPUR, June 29 (Bernama) -- The Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang officially ended its illustrious 33-year career as the nation's major gateway soon after midnight today, with the new KL International Airport (KLIA) in Sepang all set to assume the role at 7 am tomorrow.

The nation's heartfelt gratitude to the old airport, warmly called Subang airport by many, was encapsulated by a banner bearing the simple phrase "Thank You & Farewell Faithful Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport, Subang" strung at the entrance of its Terminal 1 building.

At the KLIA, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was there to witness the arrival of equipment belonging to Malaysia Airlines (MAS), Malaysia Airports Berhad and other agencies involved in the final shift from Subang.

The national carriers's properties include two B747-400 and three Airbus aircraft which flew into KLIA after making a short trip from the Subang airport.

The KLIA was alive with activities tonight, with clowns moving around on stilts and guests entertained to music and songs, as the airport welcomed the convoy from Subang comprising some 400 vehicles like low loaders, trailers and cranes packed with ground supporting equipment.

Dr Mahathir took time to visit retail outlets at the KLIA's satellite building as entertainment troops - ballet dancers and jugglers among others - stationed at various corners of the building strut their stuff.

The prime minister will spend the night at the Airside Transit Hotel located at the satellite building to enable him to catch a MAS Boeing 777 flight to Langkawi at 7 am tomorrow, the first official flight out of the KLIA.

The KLIA was officially opened by the Yang di-Pertuan Agung Tuanku Ja'afar on Saturday.

Some 1,200 MAS staff were involved in today's final shift which started at around 2 pm. MAS began to move its equipment to the KLIA on April 15, 75 days before the new airport was to begin its operations.

MAS Senior Vice President (KLIA Operations) Capt Kamil Abu Bakar, who is in charge of the operations, said the exercise continued well after the last international flight handled by Subang, MAS' MH20, left for Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris at 12.30 am.

The last domestic flight operated by MAS was MH2638 to Kota Kinabalu which left Subang airport at 9.45 pm.

Kamil said some equipment for flight maintenance were retained at Subang for use by commercial airlines serving domestic routes. They include Transmile Air, Air Asia and Pelangi Air.

Meanwhile, some of the passengers on their way to catch the last flights out of Subang said they were proud to be part of a historical event while others were seen taking pictures for memories.

French secretary Edith Barba said before boarding the MAS flight to Paris that she only came to know that it would be the final international flight from Subang at the last moment.

Gerhard Olsson, 20, from Sweden said he was glad to know that his Royal Dutch Airline (KLM) flight was going to be second last international flight to depart from Subang.

"I am happy to be part of the history...I guess I'm just lucky," said Olsson before leaving for Amsterdam.

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